A Synopsis of

An Exploration of Modern Sensibility as Depicted in the Selected Novels of Nayantara Sahgal

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Abstract

Introduction:

The proposed research intends to explore the modern sensibility in the selected novels of Nayantara Sahgal. Modernism is found in her novels. Thoughts, perspectives, socio -cultural political aspects, events are presented through characters with modern sensibility. There are modern aspects found in her novels. The women writers expressed in her works are a study of modern sensibility. It enlightens us and brings to our notice how social reformation, social changes are possible to establish a society of equality, fraternity and liberty by revolt against the conservative thoughts, Liberal thoughts to live life theses are some aspects of the modern society. Their struggle against the odds .. point out how the path of education has strengthened the mind-set of the characters. The character's devotion for the choice , demands, fundamental rights of living and loving of the oppressed and exploited era in the colonial era. The impact of colonialism is also found in her novels.

In the nineteenth century with the publication of Bunkim Chandra Chatterjee's Rajmohan's Wife (1864) and Lal Behari Day's Govind Samanta(1874), Indian novel in English has grown-up by bounds and confines in reverence of thematic variability and linguistic development. Both of them have used an acquired language to remark

on the Indian social background. But compared to the current output, most early novels in English were almost imitative and faulty. It is assumed that Indian novels in English have their roots in the nineteenth century realistic tradition of English novels.

Indian English Novels:

In order to understand the rise and growth of Indian English Novels, it is essential to take into consideration its appearance, developing stages and continuing civilizations. The Indian novel in English has-been divided into three successive periods such as: a) novel from1875 to 1920, b) novel from 1920 to 1947, and c) novel from 1947 onwards, by the Indian scholars like K.R.S. Iyengar (1962), M. K. Naik (1982) and Meenakshi Mukherjee (1985), considering the socio-political changes in India before and after the Independence. On the other hand, the classification of the novel by P. K. Rajan (1995: 9) refers to a) Early Realism: From 1864 to 1935, b) Critical Realism: From 1935 to the 1960‟s, c) Modernism: From the 1960s to the1980s, and d) The New Novel: From 1981 onwards. However, such classification has its own limitations as placing an individual writer in a specific period creates several

problems. Besides, an individual writer practises several literary modes and values of representation at the time of writing. The intellectuals in India before Independence concentrated on the national awakening and the society in a realistic manner. Bengal seems to be the source of the Indian novel in English for the prominent pioneers of the nineteenth century were upper-class Bengali writers, for instance, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Romesh Chandra Dutt, Toru Dutt, and Rabindranath Tagore, who dealt with the social problems within their reach. The pioneer novelists were trying to establish a new sense of social morality in place of the age-old social values. They were social reformers and with them, the novel became an exercise in social realism. The deeper issues of national as well as human life do not enter into their novels. The women writers wrote about nubile romances and marital male adjustment and their malecounterparts wrote about socio-political issues. Modernism, though came late to India, it has played an important role in shaping the second generation novelists such as Bhabhani Bhattacharya, B. Rajan, Malgonkar, Khushwant Singh, Chaman Nahal, Arun Joshi, Kamala Markandaya, R.P. Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and a few others who have made a tremendous contribution to novels in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The Indian novelists before Independence were mainly interested in social, political and historical concerns. But later in the 1950s a new kind of novel dealing with contemporary issues appeared on the Indian literary scene. The psychological novel depicting the human personality and inner realities of life replaced the realistic novel. Their achievement lies in finding out the new fictional themes and methods. In a sense they are contemporary novelists as they deal with the history of post-Independence India, the predicament of the modern man and the contemporary reality in modern India. They made the novel a medium of global expression. According to K.R.S.Iyengar (1985: 322) the novel is “a living and evolving literary genre, and is trying,in the hands of its practitioners, a fusion of form, substance and expression that is recognizably Indian yet also bearing the marks of universality.

Biographical Sketch:

Nayantara Sahgal:

Nayantara Sahgal was born on May 10, 1927 into one of India's most prominent political families. With her mother Vijayalakshmi Pandit as India's first ambassador to the U.N., her uncle Jawaharlal Nehru as India's first Prime Minister, and her first cousin, Indira Gandhi as India's third Prime Minister, it is not surprising that politics and history inspire and underlie much of her writing. Beginning with her memoir *Prison and Chocolate Cake*, which was published in 1954, Sahgal authored other political writings - *The Freedom Movement in India* and *Indira Gandhi, Her Road to Power* - along with a collection of essays, Point of view: a personal response to life, literature and politics.Novels bring out Nayantara Sahgal as a writer with feminist concerns seeking independent existence of women. She sees women as victims of conventional Indian society engaged in their quest for identity. In her last novel *Mistaken Identity* her concept of emancipation reaches its pinnacle where her female character is an out-and-out rebel. Nayantara Sahgal served as an advisor to Sahitya Akademi's Board for English from 1972 to 1975. She was a member of the Verghese Committee for Autonomy to Radio & TV in 1977-78. In 1978, she was a member of the Indian delegation to the U.N. General Assembly. She has also held the post of Vice-President of People's Union for Civil Liberties. She received the Sinclair Prize (Britain) for fiction in 1985, Sahitya Akademi Award in 1986, and Commonwealth Writers Award (Eurasia) in 1987. She was also a Fellow of the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, Washington from 1981 to 1982.

She is a prolific writer. She has to her credit nine novels, two biographies, two political commentaries and a large number of articles, and contributions to various newspapers and magazines.

Sahgal is a novelist and political commentator who has published nine novels and seven works of nonfiction. *Rich Like Us* Won the Sinclair Fiction Prize and the Sahitya Akademi Award. Her earlier book *Plans for Departure* won the Commonwealth Writers Prize.. In 1990, she was elected fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 1997, she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate for Literature by the University of Leeds. In 2002, Mrs. Sahgal was awarded the Alumni Achievement Award from Wellesley College. Her last novel, *Lesser Breeds,* was published in 2003. The Library of Congress currently holds twenty-four of her works. Sahgal continues to write and maintains contact with Woodstock from her home

in DehraDun. In 2004, she spoke at the Woodstock's 75th annual Commencement, where she inspired yet another generation of students to make a difference in the world. Sahgal is not only a novelist of repute but is also a journalist by profession. She confesses that fiction is her "abiding love", journalism her "conscience". Talking to Rama Jha in 1987, Sahgal said that her two kinds of writing experiences — that of a novelist and that of a political journalist — though contrary to each other, are mutually sustained because, her central focus in both areas is the same — the concept of freedom in human beings, national , social and personal relationship She is a novelist of politics as well as a successful political columnist for different newspapers. Her writing is generally characterised by simplicity and boldness. Her writing is also famous for keeping in touch with the latest political ups and downs with a tinge of Western liberalism and modernism.Her novels truthfully mirror the contemporary Indian political theme. Her novels portray contemporary incidents and political realities saturated with artistic and objectivity. All her major characters of the novel are drawn towards the vortex of politics. Besides politics, her fiction also focuses attention on Indian pre and post impact of colonialism, search for sexual freedom and self-realization which concerns modern sensibility .

The Selected Novels of Nayantara Sahgal:

- *Indira Gandhi: Her Road to Power (novel; 1982)*
- *Plans for Departure (novel; 1985)*
- *Rich Like Us (novel; 1985)*
- *Mistaken Identity (novel; 1988)*
- *A Situation in New Delhi (novel; 1989)*
- *Lesser Breeds (novel; 2003)*

I. Review Of Literature And Development In The Subject:

All the completed research on Sahgal has different aspects . They are never touched on the proposed research work. They are neither same nor touch with my topic in any angle of the work. They have presented feminist, postcolonial, political, social cultural, moral degradation… aspects. But The present research work is totally new, innovative. and never be

taken for any research work till . As there is a literary gap in the research work and time duration the present topic is innovative.

1. Dhillon, Surendra Singh in his research - ' *A Postcolonial Study of Nayantara Sahgal' depicted the term colonialism & Postcolonialism. She is a committed nationalist author and concerned with big issues and the term postcolonialism.As considered typical of postcolonial writings, nationalism, moral degradation, cultural change are preoccupied with Sahgal in the research work* by Dhillon..
2. *' Nayantara Sahgal perspective on politics and women'* by Pandy Uma. *defined the perspective on women and contemporary politics* .
3. *'Society and Politics: A Study of the Selected Novels of Nayantara Sahgal.'* by Gajjala Mallesh has presented the socio and political aspects . Nationality, politics, the then social conditions has depicted in Sahgal This research work done by Mallesh
4. *'Politics as Context in Nayantara Sahgal's Novels A Feminist Perspective '* by Chaudhury, Ivy. has written about the then contemporary politics which was stated by Sahgal in her novels.
5. *'Human Relationships in the Novels of Nayantara Sahgal'* by Shukla Richa. *has depicted that her protagonist characters Rose, Sonali Ram… their thoughts, perspectives, relationship. Humanity has been beautifully depicted in the work.*
6. *'Martial Discord and Feminist dissent in the Novels of Nayantara Sahgal'* by G Baskar.
7. *'Society, religion , politics and women in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya and Nayantara Sahgal'* by Syed Abdul Gaffor.

The proposed research is entirely new and innovative in the field of literary research. All the selected novels have never been combinedly explored and studied as the topic chosen for the research. These novels will encapsulate a strategic and unique mode of modernism. The innovative, liberal thoughts, narrative technique, symbolism, nihilism, individualism, existentialism, and all other key elements of modernism found in her novels. Politics and through the readings of literature, though it is not entirely new as we are aware of the historical tradition of writing in the world. All our saints, social reformers and great leaders upheld human values, spiritual path and logical or rational thinking in their writings, and

simultaneously they surfaced the social evils of society, which is divided into religions and castes. But this research will establish a new paradigm of modern sensibility.

II. **Modernism** :

Modernism is a term, a literary and cultural and an international movement . It flourished in the first four decades of the 20th century. This era reflects a sense of cultural crisis which was both exciting and disquieting, in that it opened up a whole new vista of human possibilities at the same time as putting into question any previously accepted means of grounding and evaluating new ideas. Modernism is a revolt against the conservative values of realism. Modernism is marked by experimentation, particularly manipulation of form, and by the realisation that knowledge is not absolute. Modernism is not only a term but it is a new lifestyle, a new perspective of humans.

III. Objectives

The objectives of the to be research are cited as below:

1. To explore the views, ideas, and thoughts of the writers and modernism.
2. To interpret their propagation with their sense and sensibility with modern aspects.
3. To co-relate the events and characters with modern sensibility,
4. To analyse how the oppressed and exploited can rise and fight for their rights despite all odds.
5. To delineate a message based on rational mode of thinking to establish human values and social harmony with modernism.
6. To interpret new era, new modern ideas in her selected novels.
7. To study the main elements such as Symbolism, nihilism, absurdity, individualism, liberal thoughts, experimentation, formalism, creative, revolutionary thoughts… find in her Sahagal's selected novels.

IV. Hypothesis:

In this proposed research work an attempt is being made to evaluate Nayantara Sahagal's various fictional themes through the modernist perspective in her novels, characteristics and features of modernism presented in her work through her characters…Rose, Sonali, Ram…. The modern term is introduced by her through these characters. The new thoughts, perspective, social change, self-consciousness, revolt against the conservative values break from tradition, Individualism, nihilism..etc. Her characters express themselves in more experimental ways than in the past. Modernist works often contain non-linear narratives and free-flowing interior monologues that emphasise the experiences and emotions of the individual . The various key elements, characteristics, and features of modernism are found in her novels which depict the modern era.

V. Research Methodology:

The method of library research would be followed for the present research. The major task of the researcher deals with the research methodology. The research methodology will be evaluative, interpretative, Critical , analytical and descriptive. The library trends will be made as per necessity. Resources in printed form from the various study centres, library universities etc. will be explored; web resources will also be extensively used.

VI. Probable Date of Completion:

This work probably is proposed to be completed within two years from the date of registration. The data collection will take six months, for studying and writing – six months, for systematic organisation of the work for six months and analysis of the work for six months. The writing and analysis of her novels with the modern perspective is within six months. In this way overall the maximum and minimum time of two to three years will take for the proposed research work.

VII. Importance Of Study/ Society Application

Literature has been instrumental in changing and educating the society across the world from the time immemorial, though the forms of literature have continuously been changing in the course of time. From historical monuments, carvings, paintings, holy books, and subsequent development and introduction of literary genres to literature of protest and to recently the digital and medical humanities, all have generated a literary taste of ‘delighting and instructing’ either art for art’s sake or art for morality or reformation. Keeping this tempo

of knowledge, the novels of Sahgal defined the modern era. This proposed research will be a social document for further research in the field of academics, with inspiration and impacts of colonial and postcolonialism turning towards the modern era. The research work is on the renowned author Nayantara Sahgal and her selected work who depicted the modern era in her novels. The key elements, features, characteristics of modernism in the work of Sahgal depicted that conservative thoughts turned into modern era and the liberal perspective of the characters.

VIII. Proposed Work Plan/ Formulation And Structure Of Study:

Sr. No.	Chapter Number	Title Of The Chapter
1.	Chapter **I**	Introduction
2.	Chapter **II**	Modern, Modernity, Modernism And Modern Sensibility
3.	Chapter **III**	Modern Sensibility *In Indira Gandhi Her Road To Power* and *Plans For Departure*
4.	Chapter **IV**	Modern Sensibility In *Rich Like Us* and *Situation In New Delhi*
5.	Chapter **V**	Modern Sensibility In *Mistaken Identity* And *Lesser Breeds*
6.	Chapter **VI**	Conclusion

Her novels present the contemporary situation, political aspects, position of women in Indian society , her different roles and perspective, psychology, and isolation . Liberal feminism humanism , sufferings realistically presented by her novels. Moral context, theme of alienation, new life style, new turning perspective, approach and attitude of her characters have presented the new modern era. The aim of the research work is to study the different perspectives which are found in her works. .

Limitations to Literature:

The proposed research work is done to find out the characteristics and features of modernism in the selected novels of Nayantara Sahgal. It is just limited to her six selected novels with a modern perspective. To find out the modernism, modern sensibility, and modern perspective of her characters are the limitations of the proposed research work. To find out and analyse her selected novels with the perspective of Modern sensibility is the only main aim of the research work.

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